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SIR JOHN FRANKLIN'S LIFE, BY CAPTAIN
A. MARKHAM, R. N.

The Editor of the BULLETIN.

SIR :—I have so far abstained from attempting to publish any notice of the above book in the papers, because for some time past their columns have been crowded with more interesting matter, and also because I waited to see if any one else took up the subjects I desired to touch upon.

I now adventure to hope that you may kindly grant me space for a brief examination into and correction of two or three statements in this biography, with which my name and Arctic explorations are more or less connected.

At page 199, we are told that “Dease and Simpson also explored the southern shores of Wollaston and Victoria Lands.”

To this I reply, that Dease and Simpson never even saw, far less explored, any part of Wollaston Land. This land was seen at a distance of from 30 to 40 miles by Dr. Richardson (late Sir John) in 1826 and named by him, and was carefully searched and surveyed by me on a sledge journey in 1851 when employed in the Government service to look for the Franklin expedition. A journey of over one thousand miles at the average rate of 24 miles a day, I myself hauling a light sledge of from 50 to 60 pounds weight nearly all the distance. Dease

and Simpson did see and roughly explore in 1839 about 140 miles of Victoria Land, lying between longitudes 105° and 110° West. All the rest of the coast was examined closely by me in the sledge journey already mentioned, and on a very long boat voyage, during which I also examined and named the west shore of Victoria Strait up to latitude $70^{\circ} 15' N$.

On the same page 199, Markham tells us that "The entire North American Coast has thus (in 1839) been delineated."

In the above line this careless, or possibly designing, author, crowds into the briefest possible space a complete misstatement of facts, perverting, if allowed to pass unchallenged, a rather important part of the history of Arctic exploration, for which he is liable to the accusation of culpable negligence; the means of putting himself right being easily within his reach at the library of the Royal Geographical Society, had he wished to inspect Simpson's narrative and chart.

Hear what Simpson says on his reaching the extreme east point of his voyage at the Castor and Pollux River ($94^{\circ} 14'$ West Longitude) in the autumn of 1839—*page* 377: "We could hardly doubt having now arrived at that large Gulf uniformly described by the Eskimos as containing many Islands, running down southward till it approached within 40 miles of Repulse Bay. The exploration of such a Gulf to the strait of the Fury and Hecla would necessarily demand the whole time and energy of another expedition." So much for this author who writes at random! Apart from this, Simpson's conclusions—by which he made Boothia an island—were wholly in error, as I proved beyond a doubt in

1847, and again in 1854, by walking over about 70 or 80 miles of land from east to west (connecting Boothia with America) which Simpson reported as sea. Had he been able to go 4 or 5 miles east of the Castor and Pollux River, he would have distinctly seen the land extending north of Boothia. If Markham's statement had the slightest foundation in fact, what was the use of the Hudson's Bay Company's Expedition of 1846-47, the whole object of which was to unite Dease and Simpson's discoveries or those of the Ross's on Boothia, with Parry's Fury and Hecla Strait? Finding Simpson wrong, I did the latter. Then in 1854 I united Simpson's survey with that of Ross, west of Boothia. Thus nearly 800 miles of the 1,000 left unexplored in 1839—Markham's absurdities notwithstanding—were completed by me, but there still remained about 200 miles, between Bellot Strait and the Magnetic Pole on the west shore of Boothia, a blank on the charts, and these were explored by McClintock in his memorable sledge journey in 1859, just 20 years after the date fixed by the author of "*Franklin's Life*," as that on which the whole coast of North America had been "delineated" by Dease and Simpson.

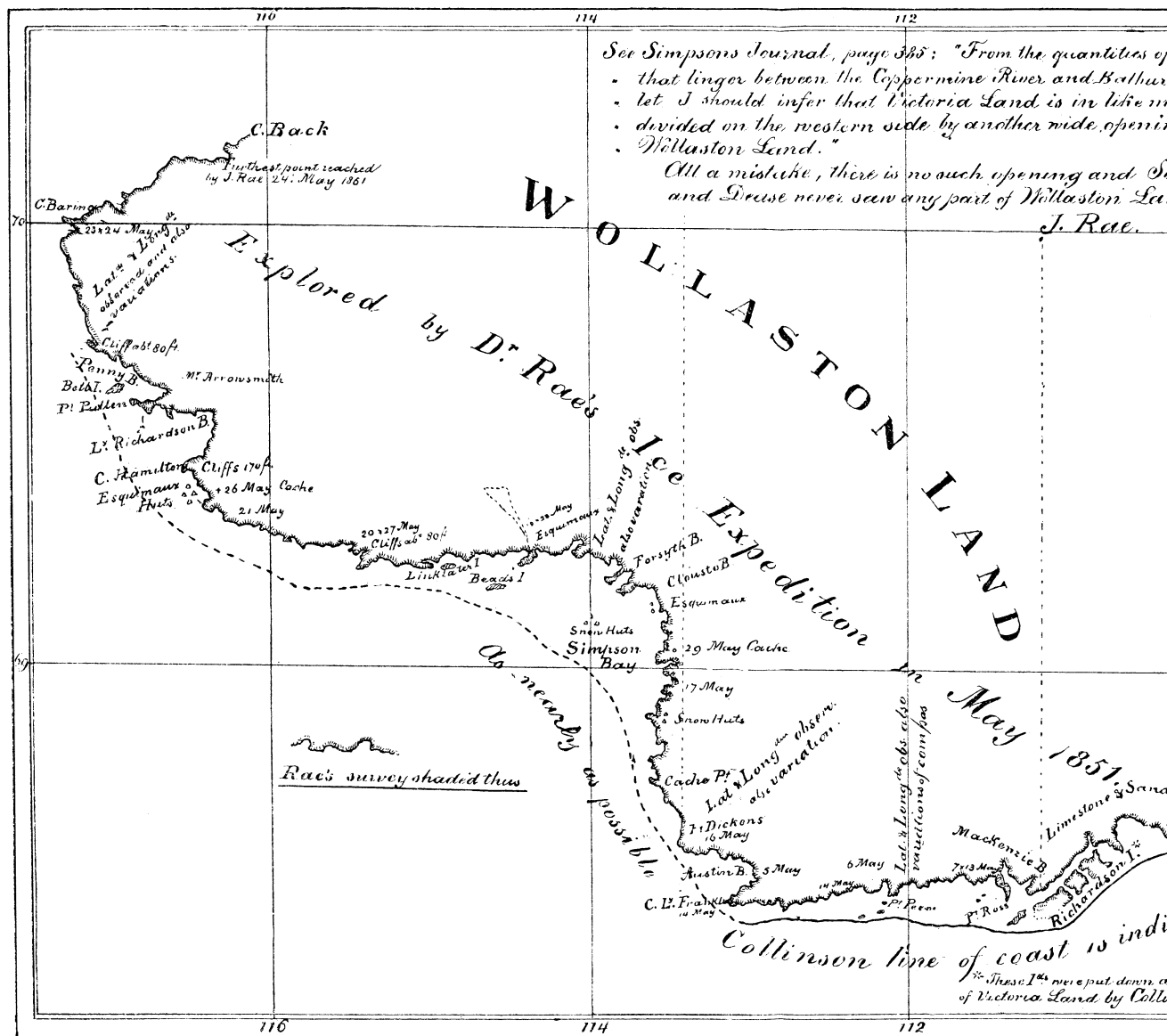
But this is not quite all. Mr. E. G. Ravenstein, who manufactured the chart of "*Arctic American progress of Discovery*," which is attached to the "*Franklin Life*," has given the greatest and noblest of Arctic Navigators, Parry, the credit of having explored the west shore of Melville Peninsula, although neither he, nor a single member of his officers or crew, ever saw a mile of it.

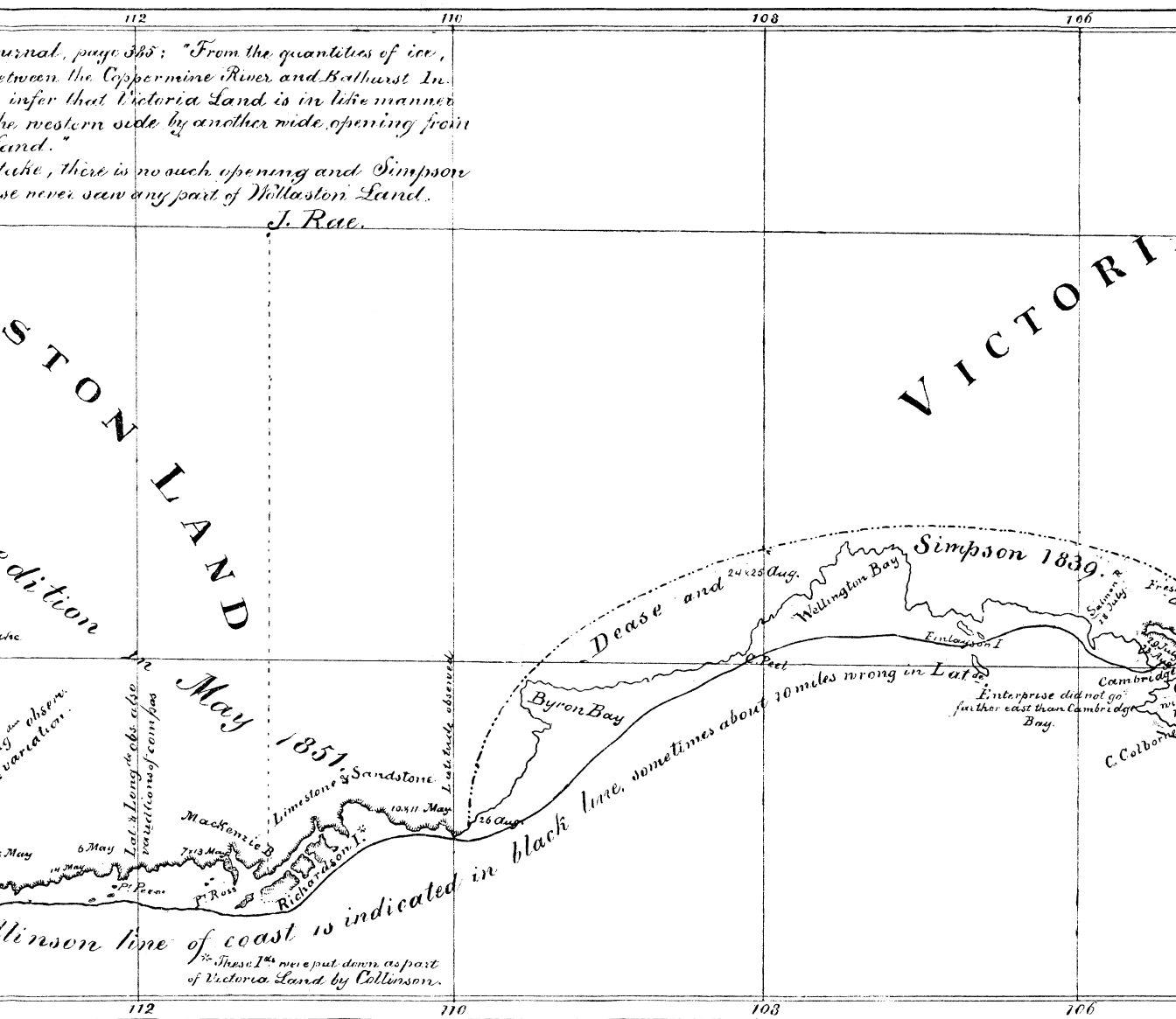
How this came about is as follows: Parry entered on one of his charts (see narrative of his second Arctic

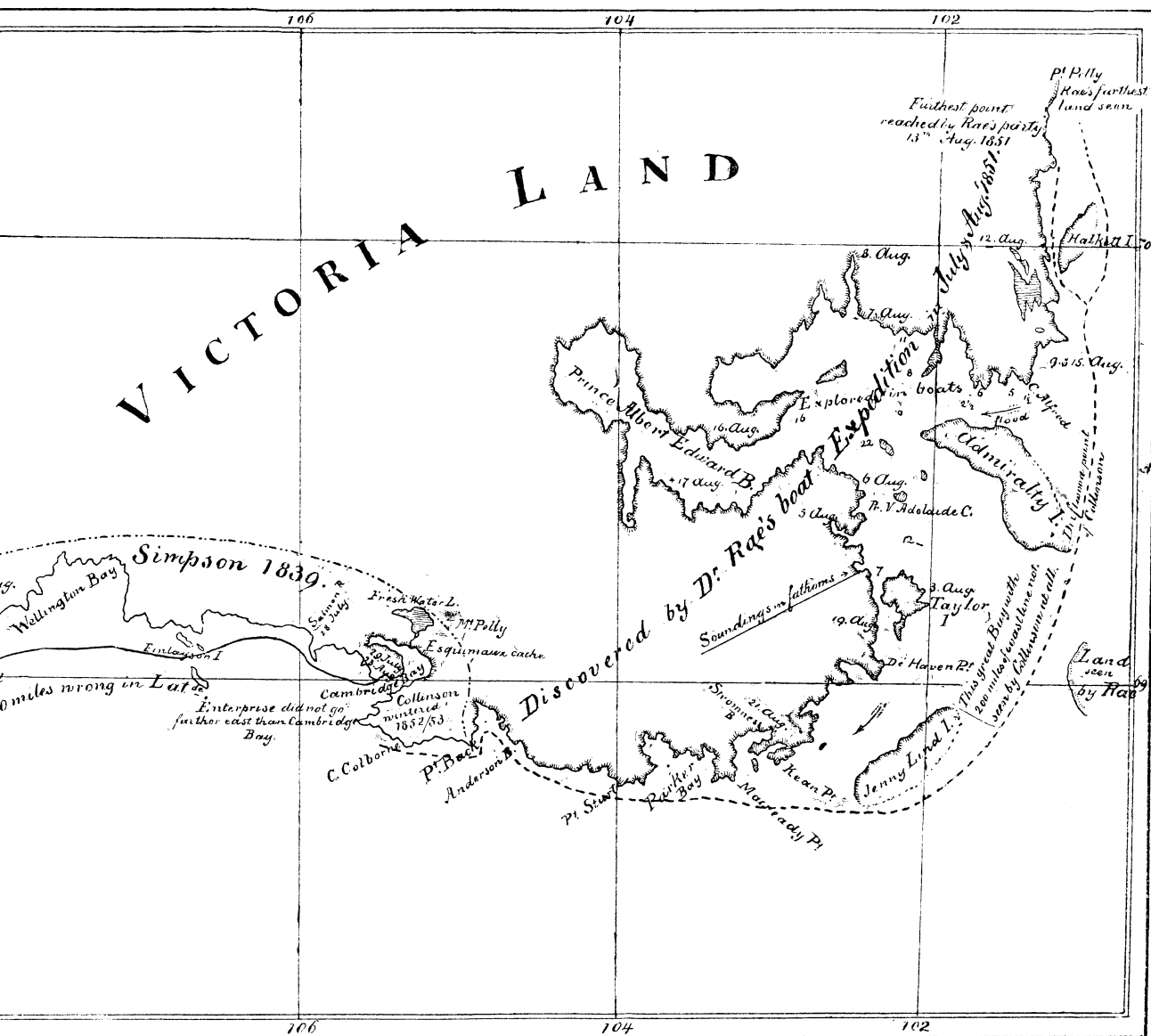
voyage, 1821-23), a simple line—not shaded—as his own surveys on the same chart are telling us that it was a tracing of the west shore of Melville Peninsula from Eskimo information. No Hydrographer or Geographer was, during a period of sixty-seven years, foolish enough to imagine, that this line indicated a survey of Parry's expedition, for not a word was said about it in his journal, where it certainly would have been the greatest thing in sledging done by this great crowd of 100 or 120 blue jackets, for, as far as I can make out, the whole lot, although aided by some splendid teams of dogs, made no single continuous sledge journey over 200 miles in length!! during the two springs they passed at Melville Peninsula.

On my exploration of the West Coast of this Peninsula in 1847, by a very arduous journey over ice, I found the Eskimo tracing, above referred to, over seventy miles wrong in Latitude at its southern end, and at another part a degree and a half of Longitude in error, yet it was on this incorrect tracing that Ravenstein founded a claim to deprive me of three hundred miles of my survey, to remove my name from Melville Peninsula, where it had stood unchallenged for many years, and make a gift of it to a Naval Officer of great merit, but who, as I have already said, had neither himself nor any of his people seen a mile of the coast named. Had that noble officer been now alive he would have scorned to accept such an ill-begotten and false a gift.

There is much in this Biography that is quite as much open to censure as the points I have mentioned, and I fear, have dwelt too long upon. In the interest of truth, and the correctness of the history of Arctic exploration,







to say nothing about a sense of common justice to myself, may I beg of you to publish this letter?

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN RAE, M. D., F. R. S.

4 Addison Gardens, Kensington,

22d June, 1891.